

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

/057 W

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R 090849Z SEP 76  
FM USLO PEKING  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6329  
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: TPHY, CH  
SUBJECT: VISUAL IMPRESSIONS OF EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT IN PEKING

REF: PEKING 1623 (LAST IN THE SERIES)

1. DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS WE HAVE NOTED A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EARTHQUAKE-RELATED CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT PEKING. ALTHOUGH THE EARTHQUAKE ALERT WAS LIFTED ON AUGUST 15 LITTLE VISIBLE CONSTRUCTION WORK WAS BEGUN UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH (POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF DAMAGE SURVEYS STILL UNDERWAY OR POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF POPULAR BELIEF THAT ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE WAS LIKELY AT THE TIME OF THE NEW MOON ON AUGUST 26). HOWEVER, SINCE EARLY SEPTEMBER MANY PEKING STREETS HAVE REFLECTED AN IMPRESSIVE SCALE OF RECONSTRUCTION WORK. LARGE QUANTITIES OF RUBBLE ARE BEING REMOVED FROM THE HOUSES AND COURTYARDS ALONG PEKING'S SMALL LANES TO THE MAIN STREETS FOR PROMPT LOADING ON TRUCKS. NUMEROUS FRONTEND LOADERS ARE BEING USED TO SPEED UP THE MOVEMENT. SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL (PRIMARILY BRICKS, LIME, AND DIRT) LINE MANY OF THE STREETS AWAITING MOVEMENT TO THE RECONSTRUCTION SITES.

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2. LITTLE OF THE ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION WORK CAN BE SEEN FROM THE STREET, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT MUCH OF THE EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE INVOLVED COLLAPSED OR SEVERELY CRACKED WALLS RATHER THAN LARGE-SCALE DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES. IN MANY CASES IT MAY HAVE BEEN DECIDED TO REBUILD ENTIRELY A CRACKED WALL INSTEAD OF ATTEMPTING TO REPAIR IT. OFFICIAL FIGURES ON THE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE AND THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN PEKING ARE STILL NOT AVAILABLE.

3. ALTHOUGH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PEKING'S RESIDENTS HAVE MOVED BACK TO THEIR HOMES, SOME THOUSANDS ARE STILL LIVING IN TENTS AND TEMPORARY SHELTERS. PUBLIC PARKS, ATHLETIC FIELDS, AND OPEN AREAS THROUGHOUT THE CITY ARE FILLED WITH FAMILIES CAMPING OUT. FOREIGNERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WALK THROUGH THE ENCAMPMENTS, BUT OBSERVATION FROM THE OUTSIDE SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE ORDERLY AND ARE BEING SUPPLIED WITH AT LEAST THE BASIC NECESSITIES.

4. THERE APPEARS TO BE EXCELLENT OVERALL CORRINATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CITY'S RELIEF EFFORT. LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE -- INCLUDING MANY PLA SOLDIERS -- HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED INTO TEAMS AND IN MANY AREAS THEY CAN BE SEEN WORKING LATE INTO THE NIGHT. IN SOME PARTS OF THE CITY WE HAVE SEEN BANNERS REFERRING TO SPECIALLY ORGANIZED CONSTRUCTION GROUPS. BUILDING MATERIALS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PROVIDED PROMPTLY IN LARGE QUANTITIES, WHILE TRUCKS TAKING AWAY THE RUBBLE CONSTANTLY CLOG MANY OF PEKING'S NARROW STREETS. IN SOME AREAS DEPARTMENT STORES AND SHOPS HAVE MOVED THEIR GOODS TO THE SIDEWALK AND ARE DOING A BRISK BUSINESS WHILE THEIR BUILDINGS ARE BEING REPAIRED.

5. IN GENERAL, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RECONSTRUCTION WORK, THE CITY APPEARS TO HAVE LARGELY RETURNED TO ITS PRE-EARTHQUAKE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DISASTER RELIEF, REPORTS, NATURAL DISASTERS, EARTHQUAKES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 09 SEP 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ElyME  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976PEKING01777  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760340-0902  
**From:** PEKING  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760977/aaaacogb.tel  
**Line Count:** 98  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 PEKING 1623  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2004 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** VISUAL IMPRESSIONS OF EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT IN PEKING  
**TAGS:** TPHY, CH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006